

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 IO-13 TRSE-00 SSM-03 MCT-01
NEAE-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 /096 W
-----071647Z 103864 /45

P R 071536Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3585
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE 247
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1572

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI PINS PINT LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION APRIL 1-7

REF: BEIRUT 1440 (DTG 311541Z MAR 77)

1. SUMMARY: THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH DETERIORATED
THIS WEEK AS HEAVY FIGHTING CENTERED AROUND TAIBEH AND
MARJAYUN. SYRIANS ARE REPORTEDLY SUPPORTING FATAH INDIRECTLY
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AGAINST CHRISTIANS. CAMILLE CHAMOUN'S ALLEGATIONS TO THE PRESS
THAT THE PALESTINIAN AIN JALUT BRIGADE HAD RECENTLY ARRIVED IN
TYRE APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN UNFOUNDED. CHAMOUN AND THE NEW
COMMANDER OF THE LEBANESE ARMY, VICTOR KHOURY, MET FOR ALMOST
AN HOUR AND A HALF. IN A 90-MINUTE TELEVISION INTERVIEW, PRIMIN
SALIM AL-HOSS CALLED UPON LEBANESE TO TAKE A PRAGMATIC
APPROACH TO SOLVING THEIR PROBLEMS. THE ASSEMBLY OF

CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS REJECTED ALL FORMS OF PARTITION. END SUMMARY.

2. SITUATION IN SOUTH DETERIORATES.

A. THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH DETERIORATED THIS WEEK, AS PALESTINIANS COUNTERATTACKED AROUND TAIBEH AND MARJAYUN TO REPEL CHRISTIAN ADVANCES OF LAST WEEK. DESPITE CONFLICTING CLAIMS OF SUCCESSES, THE FIGHTING HAS GONE BACK AND FORTH OVER TAIBEH, ALTHOUGH THE PALESTINIANS APPEAR TO BE IN CONTROL AT THE MOMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS CONDUCTED FORAYS AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN-HELD TOWN OF MARJAYUN AND MANAGED TO ENTER THE SUBURBS BEFORE BEING REPULSED.

B. THERE ARE SIGNS THAT SYRIANS ARE INCREASING THEIR SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS IN THE AREA. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES, SYRIAN-SPONSORED SAIQA UNITS GAVE DIRECT ARTILLERY SUPPORT TO PALESTINIAN UNITS IN TAIBEH, WHILE MEMBERS OF THE YARMUK BRIGADE ARRIVED IN NABATIYAH. CHRISTIAN REACTION TO THE CHANGE IN SYRIAN ATTITUDE IS NOT YET CLEAR, ALTHOUGH SOME CHRISTIAN MILITIA UNITS MAY HAVE BEEN ALERTED FOR DEPLOYMENT TO THE SOUTH.

3. RUMORS ABOUT AIN JALUT BRIGADE.

FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN TOLD THE PRESS ON APRIL 3 THAT 700 MEMBERS OF THE PALESTINIAN AIN JALUT BRIGADE HAD RECENTLY ARRIVED BY SHIP IN TYRE FROM EGYPT. HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE GOL, GOE, AND PLO HAVE ALL CATEGORICALLY DENIED THE BRIGADE HAS BEEN DEPLOYED TO LEBANON, AND OTHER RELIABLE SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THERE IS NO TRUTH TO THE STORY.

4. CHAMOUN MEETS KHOURY AND BOUTROS.

A. CHAMOUN AND THE NEW COMMANDER OF THE LEBANESE ARMY, VICTOR KHOURY (WHOSE APPOINTMENT CHAMOUN HAD VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED), MET FOR ALMOST AN HOUR AND A HALF ON APRIL 3 AT CHAMOUN'S RESIDENCE IN EAST BEIRUT. CHAMOUN TOLD THE PRESS AFTERWARDS THAT THE TWO MEN HAD AGREED ON THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A COMMISSION, INCLUDING CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM OFFICERS ALIKE, TO STUDY HOW TO BUILD A NEW LEBANESE ARMY. THE TWO MEN ALSO ENDORSED A PLAN FOR EVENTUAL COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE.

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4. CHAMOUN ALSO MET WITH FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTER
FUAD BOUTROS AT LUNCH GIVEN BY AHD BAROUDY ON MARCH 31.
RELATIONS BETWEEN CHAMOUN AND BOUTROS HAVE BEEN POOR FOR SOME
TIME AND HAVE BEEN FURTHER STRAINED BY SUSPICIONS THAT CHAMOUN'S
FOLLOWERS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT
AGAINST BOUTROS ON MARCH 27. AT LUNCH ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT LE
JOUR BOUTROS SAID, "YOU DID NOT COME TO CONGRATULATE ME ON MY
ESCAPE FROM THE BOMB ATTEMPT." TO WHICH CHAMOUN
REPLIED, "BECAUSE YOU HELD ME RESPONSIBLE FOR IT." BOUTROS
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REPORTEDLY COUNTERED, "I DID NOT ACCUSE YOU AND COULD NOT DO
SO ANYWAY BECAUSE I KNOW THE GRANDEUR OF YOUR SOUL AND THE
NOBILITY OF YOUR CHARACTER."

5. AL-HOSS TELEVISION INTERVIEW.

A. IN 90-MINUTE INTERVIEW ON LOCAL TELEVISION ON APRIL 2, PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS CALLED UPON LEBANESE TO TAKE A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO SOLVE THEIR INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND BUILD AN EFFECTIVE NEW STATE. HOSS REJECTED ANY RIGID POLITICAL PRESCRIPTION: "I BELIEVE THAT WHAT IS NEEDED NOW IS A SIMPLE FORMULA...WHOEVER SEEKS A FORMULA AT THIS STAGE MUST NOT GET LOST IN THE DETAILS...WHAT IS REQUIRED IS A STATE THAT A CITIZEN CAN RELY ON."

B. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE "FINAL SETTLEMENT OF LEBANESE PROBLEM WILL NOT BE ACHIEVED BEFORE SETTLEMENT OF MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM," HOSS WARNED THAT LEBANESE MUST ATTEMPT TO WORK OUT THEIR PROBLEMS ALONE IN THE INTERIM. "SINCE THE GENEVA AGENDA IS NOT UP TO US...WHY SHOULD WE LINK OUR FATE WITH THE FATE OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE?" HOSS ALSO ASSERTED THAT "THE LEBANESE INTERPRETATION" OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS WOULD "ULTIMATELY BE APPLIED" AND THAT THE GOL WOULD SHORTLY GIVE A SALARY INCREASE TO PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES.

6. ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS MEET.

THE ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS MET FROM MARCH 28 TO APRIL 2 IN ZUQ MUSBIH (NEAR JOUNIEH). ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS, THEY ISSUED A DECLARATION WHICH ENDORSED RESPECT FOR "THE PERSONALITIES OF THE DIFFERENT COMMUNAL GROUPS" BUT CATEGORICALLY REJECTED ALL FORMS OF PARTITION. WHILE CALLING FOR AN END TO "POLITICAL CONFESSIONALISM," THE ASSEMBLY SAID THAT THIS COULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED "BY STAGES." ON OTHER MATTERS, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PRELATES PREDICTABLY DEMANDED A LIMITATION ON THE NUMBER OF "FOREIGNERS" (I.E. PALESTINIANS) ON LEBANESE SOIL AND THE REDISTRIBUTION OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES THROUGHOUT THE ARAB WORLD. PARKER

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